

Senior Recital: A Study in Collaboration

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

Kate McCoskey

Thesis Advisor:

Dr. Kathleen Maurer

Kathleen M. Maurer

Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana

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Abstract

I chose to perform a recital with a unifying theme of collaboration for my Honors Thesis. Reflecting upon my studies at Ball State University, I realized that both in the classroom and in my future life as an educator, working with others was and will continue to be an integral part of my experience. I had worked as an accompanist my entire time at Ball State, and this provided me with a unique view on the preparation process for performance. I wanted to showcase many different types of collaboration through my recital. During the preparation process for the performance, I was privileged to work with two different pianists, a violist and composer, and another vocalist. I was able to show my collegiate experience through filling the roles of accompanist, vocalist, duet partner, and solo pianist. In order to make the recital more cohesive, I chose musical works that could be grouped together—a set of Vaughan Williams' pieces, a set of lullabies, and two contrasting duets about love. Perhaps the most exciting collaboration on my recital was my work with Ayriole Frost, a violist and composer, creating a song cycle for contralto, viola, and piano. This work, *Cori Descrittivi di Stati d'Animo di Didone* (Choruses Descriptive of Dido's Moods), is an example not only of collaboration between musicians, but also that of collaboration between a composer and the performer of that composer's work. Premiered on my recital, this piece went on to be performed for the entire School of Music during the General Recital hour. We were also honored to perform Ayriole's composition on the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) recital, which was held as part of the accreditation process for the Ball State University School of Music. The song cycle was chosen to showcase the work of an undergraduate composer. Preparing and performing this recital allowed me to fully explore and realize how many different types of collaboration I have experienced and will continue to be involved with in the future.

Acknowledgements

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I would also like to thank Dr. Lori Rhoden for her advice and tutelage during this process. She has helped me grow to become a capable pianist.

I would like to thank Mr. Philip Tietze for his instruction. He was integral to my continuing growth as an accompanist.

I would like to thank Ayriole Frost. Her talent as a composer has led her beyond what either of us could imagine. I am so grateful to have been able to work with her as her accompanist and as a vocalist.

I would like to thank Samantha Calder, Jooyoung Kim, and Sean Patrick. I am thankful to have been able to collaborate with such fine musicians.

I would also like to thank my family for their support throughout this entire process.

Finally, I would like to thank Kyle Kitzmiller and those working on the stage crew. Without their help, the recital would not have run as smoothly or been recorded with such high quality.

Senior Honors Recital: A Study in Collaboration

When thinking about my Honors Thesis, I had always envisioned performing a Senior Recital. I wanted a specific theme within the recital rather than a random assortment of songs. After Dr. Maurer agreed to be my thesis advisor, we discussed what my collegiate experience had included. As the thesis is a capstone project, I wanted it to represent my years at Ball State University. After some consideration, I decided my theme should be collaboration. Throughout my college career, I have worked as an accompanist in many different settings; I am also experienced as a performer in piano and voice. The recital became based on the roles each performer filled and the interaction between them.

Throughout my recital, I worked with people in many different capacities. In choosing the literature for the recital, I decided to demonstrate several different collaborative roles. During the recital, I filled the roles of solo pianist, accompanist, solo vocalist, and duet partner. I also filled roles related to management such as scheduling, organizing, and typing the recital program notes. I was privileged to work with people in roles including: violist, viola instructor, composer, accompanist, piano instructor, vocalist, vocal instructor, recording engineer, and stage crew.

Since I knew I wanted to explore my role as an accompanist, I turned to a violist I had accompanied for several years, Ayriole Frost. We decided to perform a piece by Ralph Vaughan Williams we had played together before. The “Six Studies in English Folk Song” range from contemplative movements (numbers one through five) to a lively movement (number six). These pieces were written for a cellist and friend of Vaughan Williams, May Mukle, in 1926. Since then they have become quite popular and have

been transposed for several different instruments. Each movement is based on a different English folk song.

Through this collaboration, I was able to work with Mr. Phillip Tietze, the viola professor at Ball State. Ayriole and I performed in several viola masterclasses, gaining insight not only from our peers and Mr. Tietze, but also from visiting professors. This contributed greatly to our interpretation of the piece, as well as to our understanding of the technical elements such as balance and the interplay of solo passages for each instrument. To further polish the pieces, we also worked with my piano teacher, Dr. Lori Rhoden. She was able to give more specific advice on the technical aspects involved with the accompaniment.

In order to complement the “Six Studies in English Folk Song,” I decided to sing a set of Vaughan Williams’ songs. I had sung “The Sky Above the Roof” the previous semester and decided to include it. The piece uses a calm, sparse chordal accompaniment, which makes it sound deceptively simple. The second song in this set, “The Water Mill,” is one I had accompanied in the past and enjoyed. During my research I discovered it was part of a set of songs. After reading through the rest of the set, I decided to sing the first movement as well, which is entitled “Motion and Stillness.” This piece contrasted nicely with “The Water Mill.” Whereas the first movement is slow and has a harmonically exploratory accompaniment, “The Water Mill” is quick and uses traditional chord progressions. Vaughan Williams based this collection of songs on poems by Fredegond Shove. She was an English poet and the niece of Adeline Fisher, Vaughan Williams’ first wife. My accompanist for the vocal pieces was Jooyoung Kim, a doctoral student at Ball State University.

In choosing repertoire for the recital, I decided to sing several of the songs I had always wanted to sing. Through Dr. Maurer's suggestions and considering the pieces I had been exposed to as an accompanist, we chose a set of lullabies. These lullabies, although based on a common theme, contrasted and were written in different genres. One of the lullabies I had sung before was "American Lullaby" by Gladys Rich. This art song speaks of a nurse's love for her charge. It has a jazz-like style and one of the challenges I faced was making sure I learned the correct rhythms and pitches instead of singing it the way I had heard it sung by others. Through practicing with Dr. Maurer, I was able to break these habits and sing the correct notation.

The second song in this group is one I had always wanted to sing, but had thus far only accompanied for other vocalists—"Les Berceaux," a French song by Gabriel Fauré. This song, whose title translates to "The Cradles," speaks of men sailing to sea and the women and children who are left behind. This image of cradles signifies the loss of the men to the adventure of the sea. The accompaniment underscores this image through a bass line that depicts the rocking motion of both the cradle and the sea.

For the third work in this set, Dr. Maurer suggested I sing "Lullaby" from *The Consul*. An opera whose composer and librettist is Gian Carlo Menotti, *The Consul* deals with issues of immigration and political activists. The grandmother in the opera sings "Lullaby" in order to calm a sick baby. This lullaby is interesting because the piano part uses dissonant chords to suggest that the happy picture painted by the grandmother's words will not come true. The grandmother promises the child a life of happiness and ease if only he will sleep. The image of death is shown as being only for the old, who in

turn, watch over the young. The use of this image is also part of the reason this lullaby is not completely calming. This underlying restlessness is not present in the other lullabies.

One theme connecting these lullabies is a sense of loss present in each song. Although lullabies are supposed to be soothing songs with which to sing a baby to sleep, these three lullabies all suggest a loss. “American Lullaby” speaks of the nurse’s longing to have a child of her own, and also about how the parents of this child have overlooked their luck in having one. “Les Berceaux” deals with loss through expressing how the husbands and fathers who go to sea will be missed by the women at home and by the children in their cradles. The hope is that remembering the cradles will give the men a reason to return safely. The grandmother in “Lullaby” from *The Consul* makes promises to the baby, but speaks of her own death. In truth, it is the child, not the grandmother, who dies in the opera.

The last lullaby I chose was the piano piece I had been working on for the recital, an Intermezzo by Johannes Brahms. After doing some research, I found that Brahms had actually called Opus 117, comprised of three intermezzi, “*Wiegenlieder meiner Schmerzen*,” or “lullabies of my sorrow” (Frisch). As seen in the program notes in the appendix, Brahms prefaced the work with words from a Scottish ballad translated by the poet Johann Gottfried Herder. The ballad speaks of calming a crying person to sleep. These lines are the opening to “Lady Anne Bothwell’s Lament.” The poem actually speaks of Lady Bothwell’s bitterness about the baby’s father. Whereas in Herder’s translation, the child is only implied to be illegitimate, the original version reveals in the last few lines that the child is a bastard (Herder). The poem was set to music, and Brahms actually adapts and weaves this melody into the first movement of Opus 117. The sense

of loss seems to come from the minor key in this movement, as well as a brooding atmosphere created by slow octaves in the beginning.

Clara Schumann was actually one of the first people to review this work, identifying the third movement as having Scottish nationalistic coloring. Schumann called the pieces “*schlaf sanft*,” or “sleep softly” (Cai 122). These pieces broke a twelve year silence in piano literature composed by Brahms. An important historical note I had to take into consideration while learning and rehearsing this work is the original instrument for which it was written. The piano in the nineteenth century lacked the darker tone pianos have today. Brahms played German-Austrian pianos, which tended to be light and clear sounding, being especially clear in the lower register. This is important because the majority of the left hand part consists of octaves in the lower register. In order to bring out the melody in a tenor voice, a performer on a modern piano has to work much more carefully on balance than Brahms would have (Cai 417). The focus of this piece, for me, became being able to perform with the correct balance between my hands; for example, bringing out a melody in the middle of a triad (a three-note chord) while keeping the left hand at the appropriate dynamic as well. This piece I chose and learned with Dr. Rhoden. I also performed it for several of my peers before the recital, asking them to comment on my playing. This collaboration made my playing more confident.

Another type of collaboration I wanted to demonstrate in my recital was that of two vocalists. I have known my duet partner, Samantha Calder, for three years. She agreed to sing on my recital, which also involved collaboration with her vocal teacher, Dr. Mei Zhong. Dr. Maurer recommended one of the duets we sang; it is from a set of songs by Robert Schumann entitled *Spanisches Liederspiel*, or “Spanish Play of Songs.”

The movement we performed is called “*Liebesgram*” or “love’s grief.” The duet begins with a quick sixteenth note pickup and although the quick note is in unison, the second word is in two parts. In order sing this song correctly, Samantha and I had to be absolutely confident in our beginning pitches. We also had to practice with Jooyoung in order to time the beginning, since the piano part comes in quickly after the singers. We had to become accustomed to preparing the first note and then starting together, giving a cue to Jooyoung as well. This ensemble work is particularly important to me as a future music educator. The collaboration between a choir, conductor, and accompanist is equally complex. One of my goals for choirs I direct is for them to develop a sense of ensemble. This means they contribute to the musicality of the piece and are able to sing without a conductor, relying on their own knowledge of the music and on others in the group to stay together. As a member of an ensemble in my recital, I was able to explore the learning process in creating an independent ensemble experience. This in turn will help me teach this concept in the future.

In order to complement the song by Robert Schumann, I chose a piece by one of my favorite composers, Eric Whitacre. “*Rakút*” is the last movement of a set of songs Whitacre wrote for his future wife. In Hebrew, this song expresses the tenderness of love. It also features a violin part, which Ayriole played on the viola. I decided to have Ayriole play the violin part because the range of the part could be easily performed on the viola and because she was already involved in the recital. This piece provided another challenge for Samantha and me in the way that the melody moves from part to part. Often the alto part responds to the soprano line. The piece also lends itself to rhythmic freedom, called *rubato*. We needed to be able to communicate with each other, Jooyoung, and

Ayriole in order to find our interpretation of the piece. Learning how to communicate in an ensemble setting requires the performer to be conscious of the other performers, being flexible enough to move with them and their interpretation of the piece. This communication often takes place spontaneously during rehearsal, using eye contact and body language. Afterward, the interpretation can be discussed and practiced to become part of the piece. Another way this ensemble collaboration can progress would be through one of the participants sharing an idea and the rest of the group trying it and adding to it. In this I found the knowledge I had gained in my experience as an accompanist to be useful, because I often knew how to explain our ideas to Jooyoung, and make them understandable to her as a pianist. Although the interpretation might be natural to one performer, it might not be to the entire ensemble. Performers in this setting need to make sure changes are clearly communicated. This work showed another type of collaboration: that of chamber music.

The most challenging collaboration I was privileged to take part in was with Ayriole Frost, who was writing her first major composition. For contralto, viola, and piano, this work was composed for specific performers in addition to myself, including pianist Sean Patrick and violist Ayriole Frost. For my voice, Ayriole wrote lines to accentuate my low contralto range. For herself, Ayriole wrote a part that required the bottom string of the viola to be tuned down a half step, called *scordatura* tuning. For the pianist, Ayriole wrote large intervals designed to make use of his large hand span.

When she first decided to write the piece for me, Ayriole and I went to the library to search for Italian texts. When we read “*Cori Descrittivi di Stati d’Animo di Didone*,” or “Choruses Descriptive of Dido’s Moods,” we were particularly struck by what became

the text to the third movement (Ungaretti 262-265). The four choruses included in the anthology, written by Giuseppe Ungaretti, describe Dido's moods. Based on characters from Virgil's *Aeneid*, the poems focus on the part of the epic poem where Aeneas, following a call from the gods, decides to leave Carthage to follow his destiny. However, this leaves Dido alone, driving her to suicide (Virgil, bk. 4). In his poetry, Ungaretti describes his vision of the grieving process Dido undergoes. At first, Ayriole planned to set only the third chorus, but she later decided to set all four choruses. Her composition uses text painting to show Dido's moods.

The first movement, which seems to describe Dido's shock and initial grief, starts with an *a cappella*, or unaccompanied, section. The movement, set in a low register, builds as the range of all instruments and voices rises to the statement "*Il cuore roso, sgombra!*" This translates to "clear her broken heart." The movement ends with a question, set again as an *a cappella* section. The piano has a solo part built on tritones and diminished chords, which are built with intervals commonly used to suggest a dissonance within the mind. These sounds are dissonant within the tonal vocabulary used in common practice theory. Using the outer ranges of the piano to separate these intervals serves to complement the confusion, rage, and grief evidenced in the poetry. Seemingly random, it evokes a picture of Dido pacing, unable to find peace and with her mind racing. The last question asks if time will erase her struggles. With the instruments silent for this *a cappella* statement, the work projects an image of Dido overwhelmed by a feeling of helplessness. The last interval is a tritone, considered to be the most dissonant of intervals by Middle Age musicians. This interval was considered the *diabolus in musica*, or the "devil in music," and many theorists warned against its use ("Tritone").

The repeated use of this interval, and in particular, the use of it to end a movement, suggests Dido's extreme distress.

The second poem evokes a completely different mood, which is created in music through Ayriole's setting. As we interpreted it, the second chorus seems to be a moment of quiet reflection after grief has run its course. Ayriole decided to show this in her music through an *ostinato* for the viola and piano. This repeated pattern uses tritones in the viola part and a suspension, which creates tension, in the piano part. The vocal line weaves between the viola and piano, using half steps to create a haunting melody. The melody is repeated for each of the three verses. However, a key change for the second verse seems to hint at fond remembrance before the original key returns, bringing a sense of quiet acceptance and despair. The movement ends by leaving the suspension in the piano *ostinato* unresolved. Thus, a constant reminder of Dido's grief and inability to cope is instilled into each movement through Ayriole's use of different dissonances.

The third movement is one in which I had a part in helping shape the form. Ayriole and I saw this chorus becoming an aria with a recitative at the beginning. With this nod to classical convention, Ayriole created a fiery piano part that slows to accompany the voice in a *recitativo secco*. This type of recitative uses sparse piano accompaniment. With the focus on the voice, the piano's function becomes to change chords if needed. The poetry starts by contrasting the silence of the sea and wind with the cry of Dido's heart. Ayriole skillfully set this beginning text, using repeated notes to show Dido's grief. Text painting is used in these repeated notes to show the stillness of the wind and sea, whereas the cry uses a *portamento*, a slide from one pitch to another, to emulate the sound of a wailing cry. When the instruments come in after the recitative,

they play a passionate yet dirge-like melody. The voice joins in softly, in a section that builds to a dramatic, unison statement declaring Dido to have pain that will never give her peace. After this, a *caesura*, or grand pause, occurs. When the voice returns, it is accompanied solely by viola. These two melodic lines underscore the feeling of hopelessness the words convey. The last word of the movement, “*abbandonata*,” means “abandoned” and is shown by a descending *a cappella* line. This movement was written to show the capabilities of my range, and covers two octaves. The last note of the movement is the lowest note. After I sing it, the piano and viola enter, playing a final chord with a dissonant major seventh in the viola part.

The fourth and final movement has text that paints a bleak picture, which is echoed in Ayriole’s composition. At this point, Dido seems to have given up hope, speaking of her desire never to have been born. Ayriole uses a repetitive *ostinato* in the viola and piano, weaving a melancholy vocal line into the texture. This melody centers on half steps that eventually resolve. Throughout the entire process, Ayriole ensured she was writing something appropriate for all the parts through observing my voice lessons and asking Sean or me to play through the piano part. This cycle of feedback and revision made the composition process clear to me.

Through this recital, I was able to experience collaboration in many different forms. Although I was aware of the people who work behind the scenes of a recital, I did not realize how many people could potentially be involved. I was constantly getting feedback from at least three professors, deciding on interpretation and technical aspects. The ability to work with these professors was wonderful because I was able to draw on their knowledge and experience. I collaborated with my professors on everything from

choosing repertoire to formatting a recital program to learning how to bow. I worked with a music technology student to decide how to best record the recital. I had my peers listen to my performance on piano and voice and give feedback. The different roles each person filled in my recital are only a sampling of the possibilities of collaboration. I see collaboration as being integral to my career as a music educator. I will need to work with other people not only to teach music, but also as the administrator of a music program. Throughout my life, I will fill different roles of collaboration.

PROGRAM NOTES AND TRANSLATIONS

Kate McCoskey, contralto *and* piano
SENIOR HONORS THESIS RECITAL
with Samantha Calder, mezzo-soprano

Ayriole Frost, viola
Jooyoung Kim, piano
Sean Patrick, piano

Choral Hall – Thursday, November 1, 2007 – 5:30 p.m.

The Sky Above the Roof

The sky above the roof is calm and sweet
A tree above the roof, bends in the heat
A bell, from out the blue, drowsily rings
A bird, from out the blue, plaintively sings

Ah, God! A life is here, simple and fair
Murmurs of strife are here, lost in the air
Why dost thou weep, oh heart, poured out in tears?
What hast thou done, oh heart, with thy spent years?

Motion and Stillness

The seashells lie as cold as death
Under the sea;
The clouds move in a wasted wreath
Eternally;
The cows sleep on the tranquil slopes
Above the bay;
The ships like evanescent hopes
Vanish away.

The Water Mill

There is a mill, an ancient one,
Brown with rain, and dry with sun,
The miller's house is joined with it
And in July the swallows flit
To and fro,
In and out,
Round the windows all about;

The mill wheel whirrs and the waters roar
Out of the dark arch by the door,
The willows toss their silver heads,
And the phloxes in the garden beds
Turn red,

Turn gray,
With the time of day,
And smell sweet in the rain,
Then die away.

The miller's cat is a tabby, she
Is as lean as a healthy cat can be,
She plays in the loft, where the sunbeams stroke
The sacks; fat backs, and beetles choke
In the floury dust.
The wheel goes round
And the miller's wife sleeps fast and sound.

There is a clock inside the house,
Very tall and very bright,
It strikes the hour when shadows drowse
Or showers make the windows white;
Loud and sweet,
In rain and sun,
The clock strikes, and the work is done.

The miller's wife and his eldest girl
Clean and cook while the mill wheels whirl.
The children take their meat to school,
And at dusk they play by the twilit pool;
Barefoot,
Barehead,
Till the day is dead
And their mother calls them into bed.

The supper stands on the clean-scrubbed board,
And the miller drinks like a thirsty lord;
The young men come for his daughter's sake,
But she never knows which one to take:
She drives her needle and pins her stuff,
While the moon shines gold
And the lamp shines buff.

Rakút

Hu hayá malé rakút;
 Hi haytá kasha.
 Vechól káma shenistá lehishaér kach,

Pashút uvlí sibá tová,
 Lakách otá el tochatzmó
 Veheniach
 Bamakóm Hachí rach.

**Dereinst, Gedanke mein (Liebesgram
 from *Spanisches Liederspiel*)**

Dereinst, Gedanke mein,
 Wirst ruhig sein.
 Lässt Liebesglut
 Dich still nicht werden,
 In kühler Erden,
 Da schläfst du gut,
 Dort ohne Lieb; und ohne Pein
 Wirst ruhig sein.

Was du im Leben
 Nicht hast gefunden,
 Wenn es verschwunden,
 Wird's dir gegeben,
 Dann ohne Wunden
 Wirst ruhig sein.

Tenderness

He was full of tenderness;
 She was very hard.
 And as much as she tried to stay thus

Simply, and with no good reason,
 He took her into himself
 And set her down
 In the softest, softest place.

**One Day, O My Mind ("Love's grief"
 from *Spanish Songplay*)**

One day, O my mind,
 You will be at peace.
 Love's ardor
 Will not leave you alone,
 In the cool earth,
 There you sleep well
 And without suffering;
 You will be at peace.

What you have not
 Found in life,
 When it has vanished,
 Will be given to you;
 Then without wounds
 You will be at peace.

Cori Descrittivi di Stati d'Animo di Didone: A song cycle for Kate Jessalyn

"Cori Descrittivi di Stati d'Animo di Didone: A song cycle for Kate Jessalyn (McCoskey) was originally one song for voice, viola and piano. After working on the text from what is now the third chorus, I decided to expand the work to include all four choruses. This work is the first major piece I have composed, with creative help not only from Kate herself, but also from Derek Johnson, Dr. Jody Nagel, and Sean Patrick. More than a year went into creating this work, which began as simply an idea, and grew into a major project requiring much research and revisions on my part. I spent ample time attempting to show off the different qualities of Kate's magnificent range by listening in on voice lessons and studio classes. It was also my goal to utilize the ample hand span that Sean has, and to enhance the deep and sonorous sound of the viola with the scordatura tuning of B, G, D, and A, instead of the normal C, G, D, and A. I am truly proud of my first endeavor as a composer, and I am glad that Kate, Sean and I have had the opportunity to create such a piece of art together."

~Ayriole Frost

Da quando ti mirai e m'hai guardata
E più non sono che un oggetto debole.

Grido e brucia il mio cuore senza pace
Da quando più non sono
Se non cosa in rovina e abbandonata.

IV

Solo ho nell'anima coperti schianti,
Equatori selvosi, su pduli
Brumali grumi di vapori dove
Delira il desiderio,
Nel sonno, di non essere mai nati.

American Lullaby

Hush-a-bye, you sweet little baby,
And don't you cry anymore;
Daddy is down at his stockbroker's office
A-keeping the wolf from the door.

Nursie will raise the window shade high,
So you can see the cars whizzing by.
Home in a hurry each Daddy must fly
To a baby like you.

Les Berceaux

Le long du quai, les grands vaisseaux,
Que la houle incline en silence,
Ne prennent pas garde aux berceaux,
Que la main des femmes balance.

Mais viendra le jour des adieux,
Car il faut que les femmes pleurent,
Et que les hommes curieux
Tentent les horizons qui leurent!

Et ce jour-là les grands vaisseaux,
Fuyant le port qui diminue,
Sentent leur masse retenue
Par l'âme des lointains berceaux.

Since I gazed on you and you looked at me
And now I am no more than a weak object.

I have cried and my heart has burned without
peace
Since the day I have been no more
Than a thing in ruins and forsaken.

IV

In my soul I have only hidden aches,
Wooded equators, misty clots of vapor
On winter swamps where
In my sleep the desire
Of never having been born, still raves.

Hush-a-bye, you sweet little baby,
And close those pretty blue eyes.
Mother has gone to her weekly bridge party
To get her wee baby the prize.

Nursie will turn the radio on,
So you can hear a sleepytime song,
Sung by a lady whose poor heart must long
For a baby like you!

Cradles

Along the quay, the great ships,
That ride the swell in silence,
Take no notice of the cradles,
That the hands of the women rock.

But the day of farewells will come,
When the women must weep,
And curious men are tempted
Towards the horizons that lure them!

And that day the great ships,
Sailing away from the diminishing port,
Feel their bulk held back
By the spirits of the distant cradle

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